

# A Python astronomy package for HiPS: Hierarchical Progressive Surveys

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## Software

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## Summary

The `hips` package allows users to fetch and draw HiPS data. It supports Python 3.6 or later and runs on most operating systems including Linux, Windows, and macOS. The HiPS (Hierarchical Progressive Surveys) scheme (Fernique et al. 2015) is built upon the HEALPix framework (Górski et al. 2005) and provides a way to store large astronomical survey sky images and catalog datasets on servers (such as HiPS at CDS (<http://aladin.u-strasbg.fr/hips>)), that allows clients to efficiently fetch only the image tiles or catalog parts for a given region of the sky they are interested in.

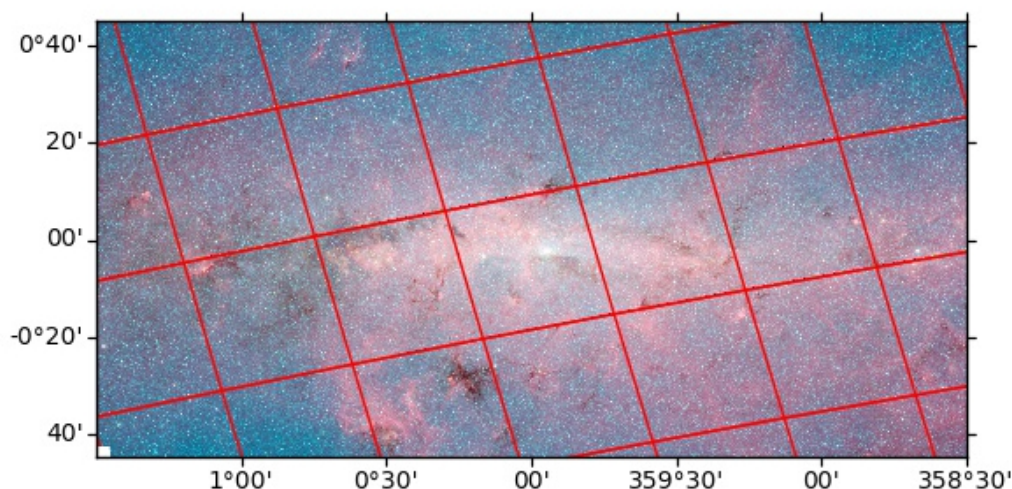
Currently, there are clients built using HiPS, such as Aladin Desktop (<http://aladin.unistra.fr/AladinDesktop>) and Aladin Lite (<http://aladin.unistra.fr/AladinLite>), but they are written in Java and JavaScript, respectively. There is also `ipyaladin` (<https://github.com/cds-astro/ipyaladin>), which provides a bridge between Jupyter and Aladin Lite, and enables interactive sky visualization in IPython notebooks.

The presented package provides the functionality for drawing a sky image from HiPS tiles, transforming HiPS to WCS images, and HEALPix to HiPS—which takes in HEALPix data stored in the “nested” scheme and creates a dictionary object containing HiPS. Additional features include progress bar reporting (`tqdm` <https://github.com/tqdm/tqdm>), asynchronous tile fetching (`aiohttp` <https://github.com/aio-libs/aiohttp>), image input/output (`pillow` <https://python-pillow.org>), and support for multiple image formats including FITS, PNG, and JPG. The FITS format stores image metadata in a human-readable ASCII header and is the standard for astronomical applications. Whereas, PNG and JPG formats contain RGB color images.

The modules provided by this package mostly build upon Astropy (The Astropy Collaboration et al. 2018) affiliated packages, namely, `astropy-healpix` (<https://github.com/astropy/astropy-healpix>) and `reproject` (<https://reproject.readthedocs.io>).

We also acknowledge `skimage` (Walt et al. 2014) for their projective transformation module which we apply for projecting HiPS tiles onto the sky image. To achieve this, we first compute the tile corners, which help us in determining the position where the tile is to be placed. The tiles are further split into four children tiles to fix the tile distortion issue, which results in a more precise image.

For a more comprehensive introduction to the `hips` package, please see the documentation at (<https://hips.readthedocs.io>) and the source code at (<https://github.com/hips/hips>).



**Figure 1:** Astronomical sky image made with the hips Python package using IPAC/P/GLIMPSE360 HiPS survey

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